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CHAPTER I

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND PERSONNEL

THE Kwoma live in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea on the Peilungua Mountains just north of the Sepik River and 265 river miles from its delta.[1] This small mountain system, not more than twenty square miles in area, is bounded on the south and west by the Sepik and a lake formed from a former oxbow in the river, and on the east and north by the vast, rolling watershed of the river which stretches to the foothills of the coastal ranges. It consists of a primary orographical feature in the shape of a letter *S* plus a series of short arterial ridges running off in all directions. From tip to tip as the crow flies the system measures a little over five miles in length. The slopes of these ridges are precipitous; in climbing it is often necessary to dig one's feet into the earth or hold onto vines to avoid falling. A dense forest of large trees covers the ridges and extends down to meet a sago swamp just above the level of the Sepik. The highest point, Ambunti Mountain, rises 1,520 feet above sea level.

The elevation of the Kwoma territory is not sufficient to cause any noticeable variation from the strictly tropical climate of the entire Sepik River Valley. The daily range in temperature, from an average of seventy-one degrees Fahrenheit at dawn to eighty-five in mid-afternoon, closely approximates the norm in the river villages. Humidity is high throughout the year. Some rain falls virtually every day and all-day storms are not uncommon, but the climate and precipitation are so uniform throughout the year that there is no clear-cut division into seasons. Gardens may be planted, cultivated, and harvested at any and all times of the year.

[1] The tribe is situated approximately four degrees and ten minutes south of the equator and one hundred and forty-two degrees and forty minutes east of Greenwich.

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132 Although there is slight variation in the amount of rainfall within the annual cycle, during the months of December, January, and February the Sepik is in flood. This fact is of such importance to the river people that they divide the year into periods of high and low water. This seasonal periodicity is also noted by the Kwoma, but it is significant to them only in so far as it affects their commerce with the river people.

136 Cassowaries, wildfowl, hornbills, cockatoos, pigeons, and a great many unidentified species of smaller birds abound in the region. The only large mammal is the wild pig. The natives report that there were formerly wallabies in the region but that now there are none. There are several varieties of small tree-climbing marsupials. Many species of bats of different size despoil the fruit trees.

137 The flora of the region is tropical. The trunks of giant trees support a mat of foliage fifty to sixty feet in the air, so dense that the sun scarcely filters through it, except where the natives have cleared a garden or house site. The swamp land is full of sago palms whose thorn-studded spathes make passage difficult. Small stands of areca and coconut palms mark the sites of habitations past and present. Betel pepper vines cling to the paw-paw, breadfruit, and paper mulberry
• 241 trees which the natives plant near each dwelling. Many varieties of yams, taro, and greens are grown as a first crop in Kwoma gardens; these are followed by a second crop of bananas and plantains of numerous varieties.

142 The Kwoma are short, stocky, negroid people with long heads, dark frizzly hair, medium thick lips, and skin color varying from light to dark brown.[2] The homogeneity in physical type is immediately apparent, although there is one family with two generations of strikingly aberrant members, whose skin is so blond that it sunburns. The so-called Papuan, or Semitic, nose-form occurs at random about as often as the dished type. Noses with straight bridges, however, are the most common.

041 [2] Their average height is five feet four inches, and their cephalic index is in the upper range of mesocephaly (71.7 to 83.6, average 77.1). These figures were taken from twenty adult males.

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and son, form a gardening group who coöperate to raise vegetables. The coöperative work group is composed of a man who needs help in performing some major task, such as clearing a garden site or building a house, and those of his relatives who are willing to help him in return for the feast which he and his wife must provide for them. A larger cooperative work group consisting of men from all the hamlets of the subtribe, builds a house tamberan; and the men and women of the hamlet that is benefited provide the feast. The women of a hamlet unite in informal groups to carry on what little fishing is done.

The trading group meets on appointed days once or twice a week. It is composed of women from one or more hamlets in the sib who bring sacks of sago flour, their male relatives who go to protect them and to gossip, and men and women from the river tribes who bring fish.

Warfare, too, is carried out by a definitely constituted group. The raiding party consists of adolescent and adult males from one or more subtribes who unite for a head-hunting expedition. The whole subtribe, including women and children, is mobilized to greet the returning warriors and celebrate a victory dance and hold a feast.

Kwoma culture specifies who shall perform the necessary legal functions of the tribe. The final authority in disputes between members of different hamlets in the subtribe is a court held at a neutral house tamberan and attended by adolescent and adult males from the whole subtribe. Disputes between subtribes are settled by a court of the men of both tribes meeting on neutral territory. In none of these courts are there legal specialists; each man's opinion is valued in accordance with his prestige in the community.

Religious activities are performed by the yam cult. This cult is divided into three sections: *Yenama*, *Minjama*, and *Nokwi*. Every Kwoma boy in the subtribe is elected during adolescence to either *Yenama* or *Minjama*; young men of promise are inducted into both sections. *Nokwi*, the highest stage of the cult, receives only men who are of high prestige and who have taken a head.

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getting the wood or water on days when their mothers are busy with some other task, and are punished if they do not. One day Buka forgot to get firewood, and Wof, her father, beat her for her negligence, when he returned and found none.

Children of both sexes participate in the work of gardening[7] by helping to clear the site. It is their duty, together with the women and old men, to clear the ground of underbrush while the adult men are in the treetops lopping off the branches. In contrast to some of the other gardening tasks reported later, children are expected to help with this work and are scolded by their parents and older siblings if they do not. Toward the end of childhood the boys are allowed to climb some of the smaller trees and try their hand at "man's" work.

In the process of breaking the ground and planting, the children usually accompany their parents to the garden site and watch the work. The older children sometimes help by putting the seed beside the hills. The younger ones, on the other hand, are likely to get bored and to retire to the edge of the forest to play. Children are forbidden actually to put seed yams in the ground, for only an adult who has been elected to *Nokwi*[8] may do this. When the yam shoots break the ground and it is time to hang stringers up which the vines may climb, the family again goes to the garden, the women carrying the split liana stringers and the men draping them from tree limbs. The older girls help their mothers by carrying a small bundle, the boys their fathers and older brothers by keeping them supplied with lianas. If the boys get tired of this and wish to play, the men carry on by themselves. Ham and Mey, for instance, on one occasion helped for about an hour and played during the rest of the morning. Weeding is the responsibility of adult women, and girls only help if they wish to. When the yams are harvested the children render more effective assistance, the boys in picking

[7] Gardening and other economic tasks in which the child participates will be described in more detail in succeeding chapters.

[8] *Nokwi* is the highest stage of the yam cult.

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857 868 up the yams that have been dug, the girls in carrying the harvest home.

• 241 Kwoma parents develop their children's interest in the work of gardening by setting aside a section of garden for each of them. The section is carefully marked off with bamboo poles laid end to end on the ground, and its produce is put in a separate bin in the family storehouse as the child's private property.

857 868 [252] Children do not participate in the process of extracting flour from the pith of the sago palm. This is a task which requires the coöperation of one man and one woman, and the technique has been so worked out that a third person would be a nuisance rather than a help. Children often go with their parents and watch, but do not actually crush or wash the pith until they are big enough to do the whole job, that is, not until adolescence.

[224] [962] Hunting is restricted entirely to men. Boys begin as soon as they reach the status of childhood, chiefly killing snakes and lizards. They usually kill these animals with sticks or stones, but sometimes capture them with a noose tied to the end of a stick, an implement which they manufacture themselves. [411] Bows and arrows are known to the Kwoma, but they [223] are poorly constructed and rarely used. A boy's father usually makes him a small bow and some bird darts, and the boy then tries stalking birds. He never attempts a shot unless he can get within a few feet of the bird, and even then the poorly constructed arrow shot from a crude bow is likely to go wide of the mark. Despite the poorness of the weapons, [224] some boys become remarkably adept at stalking. Mes, an [125] adolescent who had won a name for himself as a good stalker, became my shoot boy. He had, of course, never fired a gun in his life, but I instructed him in its use and he took about a dozen practice shots at a target. On his first foray for pigeons he brought down three with only four shells.

[224] [411] It is not until adulthood that a Kwoma may become a hunter of big game. A child is taught a healthy respect for wild pigs, and is not allowed to play with a spear, the principal hunting and fighting weapon, as it is considered too

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cut down the palm tree and remove a section of bark. The girl then crushes the pith, and the boy washes and squeezes it in a trough which he has constructed, allowing the milky juice to flow into a bark container set below the trough. A fine flour settles to the bottom of this container, and the water flows off. After a long morning's work a couple will have produced a sixty or seventy pound deposit of flour. The boy pours off the last of the water and wraps up the flour in a spathe. The girl places this bundle in her net bag and carries it up the mountain path to the dwelling on her back. The division of labor in sago making is maintained in part by the belief that, if a woman should do the man's part of the process, especially that of washing and squeezing the pith, the flour would be inedible.[a]

An adolescent girl takes the responsibility for cooking part of the family meal, presiding over a fireplace of her own instead of merely helping her mother. She prepares the vegetables for soup, boils sago flour, and roasts the meat. She and the older children share the meals which she cooks, thus relieving the mother from the task of providing for the whole family. The mother generally continues to cook for herself, her husband, and the smaller children. If there are two adolescent girls in a family, they usually share one fireplace and cooperate in the cooking. A girl must keep herself supplied with firewood and water.

At adolescence boys and girls must assume new gardening duties and become more specifically associated with the gardening group, which consists of from one to three adult *brothers* and their families.[b] They take their place in the gardening group of their father or, if the father has died, of a *paternal uncle*,[c] and begin to perform adult gardening tasks with the adult men and women of the group.

[a] Mar and Gwiyap, my houseboys, broke this taboo, a circumstance which will be discussed in chapter viii.

[b] There were six gardening groups in Rumbima hamlet, headed, respectively, by (1) Wof and Marok; (2) War, Kar, and Kis; (3) Yat and Way; (4) Waramus; (5) Afok and Fokotay; (6) Kwal and Daw. Gardening groups will be discussed in more detail in chapter vi.

[c] Gwiyap and Mar joined the gardening group of Wof and Marok. Mar, in addition, had to care for a garden which had been started by an older brother who had recently died.

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883 tasks with the adult men and women of the group. Adoles-
• 241 cents do not, however, have much voice in matters of agricultural policy, such as choosing the proper site, or determining the time of planting.

883 One of the principal duties of a boy is to assist in clearing
462 sites by climbing trees and lopping off branches; he was not
241 allowed to do this as a child because of the physical dangers involved. He also helps in preparing the yam hills and in planting tobacco, taro, and spinach, but he may not put seed yams in the ground until he has become a member of *Nokwi*, the third section of the yam cult, which does not occur until adulthood. When the yam plants break through the ground, he works with the gardening group at the task of hanging stringers of split bamboo from the dead limbs of the trees which stud the garden and pegging these stringers beside each hill. If the garden is near the hamlet rather than in an outlying district, he helps his father build a fence around it to prevent the village pigs from ruining the crop. He works with the adults at harvest time, helping to dig out the yams and to store them.

An adolescent girl does the work of an adult woman in her
[252] father's garden. She performs her share of the labor of pre-
[476] paring food for the workers, especially when a feast must be provided for a work-bee. She helps her mother carry the seed yams and the liana stringers to the garden. It is her duty to
[602] keep her section of the garden clean of weeds and to help her *sisters*, *mothers*, and *aunts* weed the sections belonging to her father, *brothers*, and *younger sisters*. The most arduous part
[492] of her labor is the transportation of the harvest. She carries
[487] from fifty to seventy-five pounds of yams in her net bag
[346] miles over the steep, slippery paths from the garden to the hamlet, where they are stored in small houses especially built for the purpose.

883 Adolescence entails no change in the fishing habits of the
[226] girls nor in the hunting habits of the boys. These activities
[224] continue to be undertaken primarily for sport. A boy is not permitted to hunt pigs until he has become a man. Nowel, an adolescent, deviated from this custom and set out to spear a

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of wood, but that the secret must be carefully guarded from the women and children. The sponsor then thrusts a roasted yam into the boy's hand and leaves him to dance by himself in the circling ring of men as he eats it.

The boy's dream of participating in the cult ceremonies is thus finally realized. From now on he may take his turn in the gong orchestra, taking care not to make a mistake lest he be shouted at and teased by the older men, and hoping to gain their praise for a perfect performance. Although adolescents are usually only permitted to beat the gongs while the simpler rhythms are being played, those who have shown a special aptitude during the practice sessions and who make no mistakes during their first few performances at the house tamberan may be permitted to try their hand at more complicated rhythms. Although few adolescents gain the skill necessary for a public performance on the flutes, they can put to use the secret dance practices of their childhood as they skip around the altar, their hands above their heads, their eyes on the wooden figures, and their bare feet rhythmically slapping the earth floor in unison with the other dancers. They may also join in the chorus which the dancers shout after each of the song leader's verses. Finally, they may squat with the adults as they drop out of the dance to smoke cigarettes, chew betel, and gossip.

The unfolding of the hoax of the cult does not destroy a Kwoma boy's belief in *marsalai;* it simply verifies his suspicion that the *marsalai* do not palpably visit the house tamberan at the time of the cult ceremonies. He still believes in the existence of these supernatural beings and does not doubt that they live in their special dwelling places and cause storms or "shoot" sago needles when they are disturbed. He is also impressed with the fact that these *marsalai* are responsible for a successful yam crop, and that the chief purpose of the yam cult ceremony is to insure their cooperation in producing a bountiful harvest.

An adolescent reacts toward his younger *brothers* in much the same way as he did during childhood. Indeed, a specific

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he is confronted by a non-relative, or who refuses to retaliate when someone has taken advantage of him, is severely criticized by his relatives. The second factor is closely related to the first. A Kwoma man gains prestige by being called *harafa ma malaka* (big older brother man),[39] i.e., one who refuses to be taken advantage of in any way. A man is respected in his own community in proportion as he is feared in others. To become generally known as *harafa ma malaka* is not a wish prompted by idle vanity alone, for with it come specific privileges. Such a person has fulfilled one of the requirements for membership in the highest stage of the yam cult, and thus need not depend on others to plant his garden. His relatives will be eager to help him when he asks for their coöperation in an economic task, although many of them might find that they had more pressing matters to attend to if he were of low status. A man who has either achieved this status or shown promise of achieving it can also expect to find favor with the most attractive women both in philandering and marriage. Finally, his word will carry much weight in any controversy, either at home or at court. Although this position of prestige is not achieved until adulthood, a man starts during childhood to establish the reputation of being hard, and continues the process during adolescence. During childhood his aggression is directed for the most part toward his *brothers;* with adolescence he begins to exhibit his toughness toward non-relatives.

The non-relatives most threatening to an adolescent boy are the relatives of the girls with whom he philanders. He reacts to them, as we have seen, by being secretive, by concealing the behavior for which they will punish him. He does not dare be openly aggressive toward them, for his relatives would be loath to support him, even non-relatives being granted the right to protect their female relatives. A boy does, however, react with verbal aggression behind the backs of such persons. He boasts to his *brothers* that he is not

[39] Cf. aggressiveness of older brothers and submissiveness of younger brothers. See chap. iv, pp. 57-58.

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food for himself, his wife, and his children. If he fails to do so, he may be criticized by his relatives, and deserted by his wife.

Gardening is an occupation which involves the coöperative endeavors of several persons.[4] The basic gardening group consists of the members of two or more closely related households, typically a father and his adult sons and their wives and children, or two or more adult brothers and their families. Sometimes a man will make a garden with his paternal uncle. Each adult male in the group has an equal share in the garden set aside for him and his family, the section being marked off with bamboo poles laid end to end on the ground. Each section is subdivided in the same way for every member of each family except the infants. This group cooperates in all phases of gardening. The males and females, children, adolescents, and adults have differing tasks allotted to them, but they work as a coöperative unit under the direction of the boss gardeners, the adult males of the group. A new function for the man is, therefore, to take the responsibility for planning and organizing gardening activities.

Some of the gardening tasks are more effectively performed by a group larger than the gardening group. The Kwoma have a work-bee system to take care of this need. Whenever the boss gardeners decide that they need help on some phase of gardening, either in clearing the site, breaking the ground, or harvesting the crop, they gather together enough food for a feast. They and their families collect a surplus of sago flour and provide meat, preferably a wild pig. If no one has succeeded in spearing a pig, they process a still greater surplus of sago flour, trade it for fish from the river natives, and use this instead of pork. When they have gathered this supply of flour and meat, they announce, both on the house tamberan gongs and by passing the word around, a work bee for the following day and request their

[4] If all the details of the technique of gardening were presented here, the main theme—socialization—would be buried in a welter of detail. Only the major processes of gardening will therefore be presented, leaving the details for another publication.

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476 relatives to help. All the members of the hamlet who do not
574 have pressing work of their own are expected to answer this
262 call and appear the next morning at the place where the
[203] work is to be done. The *brothers* of the married women of the
[621] households who are giving the bee are also expected to help if they can. While the men work, the women prepare the feast. Then, early in the afternoon, after a long morning's work, the men stop and go to the house of one of the boss gardeners where the feast is to be given. The men form a separate group from the women, eat in a leisurely manner, smoke, chew betel, and indulge in horseplay between courses. After the meal the older men either gossip or nap while the boys tease one another and play. The work is over for the day. The Kwoma are perfectly familiar with the patterned behavior of these work parties, since they have participated in them frequently during childhood and adolescence. When they become adult they have to plan the work bees, direct the gathering of food, and announce the day.

241 The first task in gardening is to choose a site, a decision
311 which rests with the boss gardeners. They must balance the advantages and disadvantages of cultivating a plot in the
[317] hamlet or in an outlying district.[5] If the garden is planted
[231] near the dwelling, it has to be enclosed by a fence to prevent domestic pigs from rooting up the crop, but it is near at hand. If a site is cleared in an outlying district, it may take several hours to walk there, but it need not be fenced.

241 The garden site is usually cleared by means of a number
476 of work bees. Since it takes considerable time and effort to provide food for the feast, the task of clearing a site is nor-
[462] mally spread over several weeks, and sometimes months. The first task, which is performed by adolescent boys and men, is to climb the trees and lop off the branches in order to let sun down to the earth below. The old men and children clear the brush and stack it and the cut branches into piles for burning.

After the site has been cleared and the rubbish burned,

[423] [5] Property rights also, determine the choice. The division and ownership of land will be discussed below.

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the boss gardeners normally prepare another hee to break the ground for the yam hills, although the gardening group may do this work alone. If the latter is the case, the women of the group work with the men instead of preparing the feast. Since Kwoma gardens are always on a slope, each hill is made by leveling the ground into a little terrace about a foot square. This is accomplished by means of a spadelike digging stick. When the slope is especially steep, the terraces are buttressed by a retaining wall of sticks laid one on top of the other, held on one side by the pressure of the earth and on the other by pegs stuck in the ground. These miniature retaining walls prevent the hills from being washed out by a heavy rain. The worker, with a final thrust of his digging stick into the middle of each terrace, pries open a hole large enough to receive a seed yam.

The Kwoma consider that the success of the crop depends more upon planting than upon any other part of the gardening process. Only an adult man who has become a member of *Nokwi*, the highest stage of the yam cult, may do this. They believe that if a youth or a woman should put the seed yams in the ground, the yield would be meager, hard, and unpalatable. Normally, one of the boss gardeners has attained the proper status to plant yams. If not, then the nearest patrilineal relative who is a member of *Nokwi* will perform the task in return for a share in the produce of the garden. On the night before a man is to plant yams, he shares with other members of *Nokwi* a ritual soup which is believed to be potent enough to kill a womangor child. From this time on until the yam shoots break the ground, he may not chew betel, scratch himself except with a stick, or smoke except by holding his cigarette with tweezers. If he does not carry out these rituals, it is believed that his yams will not germinate. The planter performs his task by putting the yam into the hole in the hill so that the butt is down and the head (stem) is up, and the axis roughly perpendicular to level ground. He then covers the yam with earth so that the upper end is just below the surface.

Kwoma beliefs about blood appear again to determine a

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244 beliefs about blood appear again to determine a
• 241 facet of the yam-planting complex. It is believed that in the
262 process of planting yams a man's blood becomes associated
826 with the seed, and hence contaminates the produce. Thus, if a man should eat his own harvest, it would be equivalent to eating his own blood, and he would sicken and die. If he heeds the warning implied in this belief, he must have yams that are planted by someone else or go without them. Kwoma culture resolves the dilemma as follows: at the time of planting, a section of the garden large enough to produce sufficient yams for the planter's personal needs is set aside. He [602] does not plant this section, but calls on a *brother* to do it for him. This provides a section whose produce will not be contaminated by his blood and which he may therefore eat with impunity. In return he plants a similar section in his *brother's* garden.

241 After the yams are put in the ground, nothing but weed-
244 ing need be done until the sprouts appear. The women of the
[462] gardening group do this, bending from the waist rather than kneeling, and pulling the weeds with thumb and fingers. They keep the ground clear until the plants have a good start and then allow the weeds to spring up unheeded.

Soon after the yam sprouts have broken the ground, [462] stringers must be provided to support the climbing vines. In preparation for this, men and boys cut lianas from the forest and split them into sections about the diameter of the [284] little finger and about thirty feet long. They tie a loop formed by a half knot on the standing part on one end of [482] each of these ropes and coil them into bundles. The women carry these bundles in their net bags to the garden, where the men hang the lianas by the loops from the branches of [417] the denuded trees. To do this they use a long bamboo pole with a cross stick, lashed a few inches from the top to prevent the loop from sliding down the pole. The free ends of the lianas are pegged to the ground a few inches from each yam hill. Each hill is thus provided with a stringer, one end of which is attached to a branch and the other to a peg in the ground. Once every few days thereafter the men go over the garden and train the yam tendrils on the stringer. The gar-

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dener takes care not to place one stringer underneath the other, for this would keep sun and rain from the lower vine.

Once the vines have a firm hold on the stringers, nothing need be done to the garden until the time of harvesting. The gardening group digs the yams with a digging stick. The tubers are then picked up in net bags and carried by the women to the dwelling.

The produce from each section is kept separate so that each member of the gardening group has his or her own yams rather than a lien on a common store. Each person's share is put in a separate bin in the small storehouse, which is built near the dwelling. This storehouse is constructed like a dwelling but has no porch. It is floored with sago spathe to prevent the yams from rotting as a result of contact with the damp earth. The bins are also constructed of sago spathe.

Although yams form the bulk of the crop, the Kwoma utilize the cleared site to produce other vegetables as well. Taro plants are set out, and tobacco and spinach seeds are broadcast between the yam hills. Unlike yams, these latter seeds may be planted by any person—adolescent or adult. There is a belief, however, that if tobacco seeds are sown by women the leaves will be overmild. In order to take full advantage of the cleared site, the boss gardeners set out banana, plantain, and coconut trees which mature after the yams are harvested, but before the towering hardwoods grow up to shut out the sunlight.

In addition to planting a garden, the Kwoma man sets out numerous useful trees around his dwelling. He sets out betel pepper vines from clippings, plants areca-nut palms from sprouted nuts, and puts in seed of a small tree from whose bark thread is made. The orchard also includes two trees whose leaves are used respectively for the inner and outer wrappings for sago briquettes, a large tree which bears an edible berry-like fruit, another which bears a large oblong red fruit, a bush whose leaves are used as greens in soup, as well as a few banana, pawpaw, and breadfruit trees. As many coconut palms as space will allow are also planted.

Pig hunting is an occupation which a Kwoma male does

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423 man belongs govern where he has the right to build his house,
611 plant his garden, and gather sago flour. In order to clarify
428 this principle it is necessary to show the relation between these descent groups and land.

423 Each family line has control of a not too clearly delimited
351 district near the house tamberan of the hamlet on which its
594 male members build their houses. The exact site is decided
613 by the builder with the consent of the other men of the family line. The districts of each family line are clustered with re-
241 spect to their lineage affiliations. The gardening land which
423 immediately surrounds the hamlet is divided into large sec-
613 tions belonging to the various lineages of the hamlet, and
59 each of these is subdivided into districts controlled by the various family lines. Similarly, each lineage controls one or more sections of gardening land in the outlying districts of the subtribe and several sections of the sago swamp. Each of these plots is subdivided into subplots administered by the family line. If a man wishes to plant a garden or extract sago flour, he must choose a site on one of these subplots and must obtain the consent of the other members of his family line.

59 The number of persons in a family line is kept relatively constant through adoption. Those lines who have few or no
[423] sons adopt boys from more numerous family lines. By this
[428] process the relationship between men and land is kept relatively constant in a society where land may be neither bought, sold, nor willed to a particular heir.

885 The responsibility for defending property rights in land,
421 produce, and tools falls more fully on the shoulders of a man
593 during adulthood than during the earlier periods of his life.
602 He not only must defend his own property against theft and trespass, but must assume most of the responsibility for preventing property violations against members of his immediate family and for helping his relatives to defend their rights against outsiders.[15] In order to prevent trespass or theft

[685] [15] Theft and trespass are considered to be aggressive acts by the Kwoma, and sanctions and retaliation with respect to them are discussed in detail below.

1: Whiting E-5 (1936-1937) 1941
OJ13 Kwoma OJ13

A man who has attained high prestige in the community and, in addition, has taken the head of an enemy, is asked to join *Nokwi*, the highest stage of the yam cult, and he thereby receives the greatest honor that a Kwoma man can attain. If he is able to achieve this mark of status, the final mystery of the *marsalai* is unfolded to him. He is told that the booming rhythm that he has always heard at the *Nokwi* ceremony is not the footsteps of the great female *marsalai* in whose honor the ceremony is held, but is a sound made by a huge water drum.[25] A man plants yams for the first time on the occasion of his initiation into *Nokwi* and learns from the cult members how to solicit the aid and coöperation of the *marsalai*, which are believed necessary for a successful yam crop.

The yam cult, in addition to being a mode of ranking men in accordance with their attainments and of providing a means of gaining the support of the *marsalai*, is the primary institution for artistic expression. It has been shown how the child secretly learns to play the gongs, to sing, and to dance, and how during adolescence he is formally taught these skills, first in the bush house and later at the house tamberan. During adulthood men vie with one another in demonstrating their accomplishments in these artistic techniques. A man who is superior in one or more of them gains high praise from the community; people speak of him as a *harafa ma malaka*. At the beginning of each ritual the participants examine the carved wooden figures on the altar and comment on their excellence, those who have made them standing by to receive the praise. Men who are adept at carving may expend considerable time and effort fashioning and painting the formalized wooden heads and figures which are supposed to represent the *marsalai* of the cult, in order to have them so displayed.

Men who show a talent for gong beating have the opportunity during the cult ceremonies to play the most sophisticated rhythms in the orchestra, and those who excel in com-

[25] The water drum is a hollowed log shaped like a canoe, truncated at both ends, suspended in water so that the lips are submerged, and beaten by a pole wielded by two men.

1: Whiting E-5 (1936-1937) 1941
OJ13 Kwoma OJ13

the hands of a sorcerer. As soon as the mother is able, she takes care of the baby and nurses it.[40] Both parents show special concern for the child until his fontanel closes,[41] as they believe that he is particularly susceptible to sorcery during this time. For this reason the mother stays at home and does not receive visitors. The father, in order to insure the child's safety during this period, does not chew betel, or scratch himself except with a stick, and he holds his cigarettes between tweezers.[42]

Under certain circumstances, when the parents do not wish to bring up an infant, they may either offer it for adoption or kill it. If a woman gives birth to a monstrosity, she disposes of it as soon as it is born. She treats one of twins in the same way. Parents may decide not to bring up a normal child when there are already several children of one sex in the family and the new baby is of the same sex. If the children are all girls, for example, there will be no one to inherit the land nor to protect and care for the parents in their old age, so the mother may offer for adoption or kill a new girl infant in order to free herself more quickly to produce another child with the hope that it be a boy. Similarly, a boy infant may be killed or offered for adoption if the previous children are all male, since it will be very difficult to obtain sufficient shell money to pay for their wives if they have no sisters. The optimal family, therefore, is one in which boys and girls are equally balanced. Infanticide and adoption are employed to approximate this ratio.

The mother has full responsibility for the immediate physical care of her offspring during infancy. For the first few months she permits no one else to handle the infant, but after this she allows her co-wife to give her short respites. She may permit the father, uncle, or aunt to hold the infant for a few moments for their amusement, but she rarely intrusts it to

[40] The above information was obtained from male informants and hence is incomplete and not necessarily reliable.

[41] Informants described this as "when the baby's heart stops beating on the top of his head."

[42] A man observes these same taboos when he plants yams.

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Kwoma OJ13

[For information on the Kwoma Yam Cult, sometimes referred to as a male secret society, see category 794.]

619 The land (both mountain and surrounding sago swamp) of the Hongwam
423 people is divided into various large sections which belong to either
631 Wanyi, Hayamakwo, or Tug. These sections are not contiguous, and are
614 specifically bounded by marked trees, rocks, streams, etc. These sections
are further divided into subsections owned by brother, real or classificatory.
[428] Land is passed on to son, or brother's son or mother's brother's son.

241 From this land, the people, working in family groups, get a living.
[262] There are two food products which stand far above all others in dietary
[462] importance, sago and yams. Both sexes and the children work in the planting,
cultivation, and harvesting of these crops, but only men can wash the sago
pith and plant the yams. There is no season for this or for any other of the
food products. Yams are planted on the steep side hills, the tops of
trees first being lopped off and burned. The breaking of the ground is done
with a digging stick. Dry taro, coconut, spinach, banana and recently
222 corn and melons are also cultivated. Beside these food products the leaves
262 of several wildgrowing trees and shrubs, and various berries are eaten.
224 Hunting is quite secondary. Pigs which are the most important of hunted
[796] animals are usually speared only in preparation for a feast, or, if
killed at other times call for a special pig-eating feast.
[223] Cassowarys are also killed by spearing, but to bag one is a rare event.
Smaller birds are very rarely shot with a bow and arrow. Snakes and
[857] lizards are a delicacy supplied by the young boys who either shoot them
222 with a bow and arrow or club them. A large grub which feeds on the sago
palm is a particular delicacy. Neither a man nor his parents may eat the
262 yams he has planted or an animal or bird he has killed. It is thought
826 that the man's blood goes into these food products, and that a man, eating
439 his own blood will die. Fish are obtained by trade and a few caught. Pigs
226 and dogs are domesticated.
231

794 partly by the fact that membership in the two cults is maintained at an
[241] approximate equality. These cults are connected with yams in that the cults are thought to be essential to the growth of these vegetables, and
[534] they are held two yam plantings apart. The second stage is the naiwi which
[241] introduces mysteries of the water drum to its members. This is also connected with yams in that the young men are initiated into this only after they have planted their first yams--itself a sacred rite.

754 Black magic is constantly being practiced and everyone in the culture is always careful of food leavings and blood which are the two most important
[182] materials for the hands of the operator. This belief is very strongly
[154] integrated in the culture and seems to function in the expression of aggressions and to offer a readymade explanation of neurotic anxiety.

795 The dfad dwell on the top of a nearby mountain in a topsyturvy existence. These ghosts chase and frighten people at night but do not kill them. They sometimes take the form of a bird or animal in the day time. In particular they hover around a dead man, for their job is to escort him
[764] to the land of the dead. (There is a double funeral, first an exposure
[765] on platform and secondly, burial of bones beneath floor of the house.)

796 There are other types of supernatural creatures who dwell in rocks, waterholes, etc., in the guise of snakes. They cause wind, rain, thunder, lightening and the rainbow, and are dangerous to man in that if they are disturbed they will shoot him with a sago needle which is painful but not
[794] fatal. These beings are associated with the men's cult. The uninitiated are told that the esoteria are made and operated by these creatures.

. . . . . .

128 This is the bare outline of the culture in itself incomplete. Some of the interstices and interrelations we have the information to fill in and others we have not.

123 the child didn't seem to mind. I played with him, much to the amusement of the women. Then I gave him back to Yat who played with him for a moment and passed the child to Ear. He gave the baby to Haub who took it to its mother.

124 754 We talked about Suw; Ear, Kis and Yat said that it was sorcery and went over the rigamarole about making sorcery that it was a native custom and that if the important men of Hongwom would come to see the boy, he wouldn't be sick. If they came, the sorcery would go away and he would be better again.

614 593 562 [591] [241] [423] The importance of a son's growing up to take over the activities of the sib was stressed. Girls are not important because when they marry, they go to another house tamberan. The boys are important because they are needed to take care of the coconut trees, betel nut, and other crops planted here. They stressed the fact that the ground itself belonged to them, needed caretakers, and told the story of the projected new house tamberan to be built when Owiyap, Mey, Fit, Mar, Kum, and Gampi were big enough.

114 [443] [685] December 16, 1936. I wrote letters all day. We got news that Suw was better "liklik". Today is the market with Yambon--Haub went down and found his canoe has been smashed by Brugnuwi; he was annoyed and wants to go to Ambunti to make court. We told him it was alright. He has to wait for the Yambons who are buying a pig from Marok for their sing-sing -- so he went to help them. Soon after lunch Tip's naremboy, Mangwiyaf, and three or four others came in, 'Sourpuss' being one of them. We talked with them. Mangwiyaf said that his canoe (the one Eve's boy took) was at Ambunti and asked if we would bring it back for him. We agreed. Then he said that the second bunch of bananas were pretty nearly ripe, and he would bring them in. Mangwiyaf had sat down and pretty soon when our talk ran out, he lay

123 This morning just as it was beginning to get light before dawn, Kam came and roused me saying that Kar was waiting for me to go to his garden (we had planned the trip the day before). I had breakfast and went. Kar was on War's porch. Everyone was ready. Kar and I went out, as War and the
123 wives would follow when the house was straightened up. We arrived at the
241 garden about two hours' later skirting the south edge of the mountain. It was a muddy walk. The large garden was on the side hill. Half hour later War, two wives, and three children, Sunga (Kis' wife), Kar's wife, Haya and Toka arrived. Kar and War first wandered around the garden pulling up a weed here and fastening up a yam runner there (very similar to the way an American farmer acts). Then they set to work fastening runners to tree limbs. They started at the top of the field and worked down to the bottom. Then pegged the loose ends on the way up and then worked on another section. The two older women wandered around pulling up a few weeds here and there and then sat down. Sunga and Kar's wife went over the whole garden pulling up grass. They finished before Kar and War and then sat
[857] down. The female kids didn't do much of anything except play about. Kis
[252] and Nay went to get coconuts, bananas and dry yams for me--they gathered
[264] firewood, made the fire, and cooked the yams and bananas. The women ate
[262] boiled sago off and on as they worked. Kar and War worked steadily until 1:00, then they ate native spinach and sago. Their food had been prepared previously, so they didn't use the fire. The women had already eaten and
[461] now went to the bush house. As soon as Kar had eaten, had a smoke, and chewed a betel nut, he went with me and War, and then he set to work again. He has a couple more days' work and then will come back. Suw, his mother,
356 and Sunga stayed; the rest came back with me. When we reached War's house, it was swept clean; everything was put away and the door shut and fastened

224 made another across Yat's road. Yesterday Yat met Doweri on the road and
[518] accused him and went up to him to fight, but Doweri threw down his spear and
[648] ran away. Yat picked up his spear and broke it against a tree. He is going to carry the case to the police, he says.

837 Mbungwi married Pokwaga and went to work at the gold fields. Mwendayu has been having intercourse with Pokwaga. They live at the old Hayunakwo house tamberan near Wenyabunkura. They have built a new little one and call it Cumbwinembara. Pokwaga is pregnant. Yat wants to take Mwendaya to Ambunti to court for this.

754 March 3, 1937. This morning a group of a dozen or so carrying spears
627 stopped in on their way to talk 'poison' again at Sowinambi's. A group from Sombundura and Way came by covered from head to foot with mud. They had been the rounds of the house tamberans showing how sorry they were so that whoever was making the poison would relax). The group came back late in the afternoon. No one seemed interested in the result. The attitude was that it had been "talk nothing" as usual. The function of the thing seems to be to shame the culprit into relaxing. It also serves to allow histrionics and a gathering to talk.

685 In the evening there was loud talk down below. Someone has stolen some of War's bananas while he was away in the bush, and he is making accusations.

439 March 4, 1937. There was trading with Yambon this morning. Kwai was
241 cutting his garden below War's. Kar, Mas, May, Mar, Asanampa, Way, Kawas helped.

114 March 6, 1937. Yesterday I went to Mar's bush house. He has only one bed so I continued to Masa'a on the way I shot a pigeon and ate it. We went out shooting in the afternoon and met Apokwiyampa who with Pokadaya has a house

754 578 carrying a spear. Later I heard loud voices at the house tamberan, so I went down. It seems that someone brought word that Kwalump was responsible for the accusation of the Hayamakwo, and people are becoming annoyed with him and brought up the fact that they mistrusted his father for killing Mar's brother. Kar brought up the fact that he and other Hayamakwo had hidden Kwalump from the police, and now they thought they would turn him over to them. [648]

123 After I had stayed for a while, Wof politely asked me to leave. I went to Wof's house and sat down with all the women and Hey. Chinawa rubbed my arms, and Khiyakay and Awa gigglingly protested and pretended to be shocked.

522 March 23, 1937. I went to Mar's with Gwiyap. Awa and Khiya were there. Gwiyap began walking around with a stick between his legs telling the girls that Fit's penis had been stiff that morning 'just like this'. Fit became annoyed and said it wasn't so. Gwiyap kept teasing him for some time about it. The girls thought Gwiyap very funny but gave Fit a piece of their mind for having had an erection in public.

241 March 24, 1937. Mar plans to go to the bush to tie up yams.

576 March 26, 1937. When news came of Sowinambi's accident (he had been bitten by a wild pig), War, Wof, Mar, Yat, and Wayakola went to pay respects.

231 March 27, 1937. Marok's dog died this afternoon. I went down to his house to find him sitting in the new house, very glum. Uka was sitting outside, but did not return my greeting. The dog was lying in the old house, Marok's wife sitting beside it. Uka came to the doorway, looked at the dog, and started sobbing -- it was restrained, not a wail. Chinawa came and started wailing, took the dog in her lap, and continued until I left.

574 476 [501] [252] April 4, 1937. Hamb called for help to pull his canoe to water, and fourteen men responded from Wenyambenkura and Hayamakwa. They came about 1:00. Hamb's wife made a soup of yams and bananas thickened with sago. Awa and Ehriya boiled sago, and Mar had his family make soup. This was not expected by Hamb, but it was a gesture of friendship and graciousness. The feast was being held at Hayamakwa, and he wanted to help. I [156] think he likes to think himself generous and to increase his presitge. The [262] first course was soup. Mar had 2 pints, but they all consumed a sizeable amount. Then there was about a ten minute pause. Some got up and walked around; others sat and talked, chewed betel, and smoked. The second course of boiled sago and meat followed. Hamb had killed a gouria pigeon [123] and brought a goodly amount of smoked fish from Yambon. I contributed a [262] tin of dry peaches which Gwiyap stewed. The older ones, particularly Afalowanj, were loath even to try it. They had to be told that it was like ripe bananas before they would taste it. Even then, they spit it [137] out immediately. Only those who had worked in the gold fields and for the [262] whites ate them with relish. There is no really sweet food in Kwoma culture, and sweets are not liked--sugar, chocolate, etc., are disliked. [521] After this, everyone sat around and smoked, talked, chewed betel, dozed, [276] and drifted away one by one or two by two as night approached. There was [522] a good deal of kidding around the point of calling each other their wives and some chasing around, especially Cimpangay and Harok, Mar and May. A standard joke is to call another person one's wife and make remarks about "her" genitals.

241 April 5, 1937. Mar, Fit, Chinamo, Ehriya, Pamba, Yawa, and Daw went to the garden. They left about dawn. Mar and Fit hung up vines; the women pulled up grass. They came back about 4:00.

000 gone, so I went to bed without lighting the lamp.

123 April 20, 1937. Mar came up with Kis from his house this morning (he had been up before and gone back), and the two of them said they wanted some of the strong medicine I gave Mar when he had poison. Mar said he had a pain in his stomach. I was busy for the moment. Later I got 2 aspirin [754] tablets--Kis took one but Mar said he didn't want his. Mar told me afterwards that Kis was beginning to think that the sore on his leg was due to poison.

241 Kriye has gone to her mother's. She left when the group went to Koriasi. Her mother sent word that she needed help gathering the brush from her husband's garden.

584 I asked Mar this afternoon about Aye. He said that Way had forbidden the arrangements--that he was afraid War would make poison. War did not like the idea of the match. The affair had come up before (I reported it several months ago). Mar had asked Mas about it, and he had said "no got". He (Mas) had told his father about it, and this had been the time when they had shouted back and forth. I asked him why War had prevented him, and he said he did not know. 'Nevermind Aye; I'll catch another wife somewhere.' There is one at Koriasi whom he 'marked' a couple of months ago and spoke to her father about. He was sort of resigned and whining about the affair--shook his head and sighed.

581 Then Mar complained about Yawa--she was lazy, didn't have strong bones. Firewood "lik lik im brok im". If she goes to break sago, she buts a little tree. A big one would take her until after dark. I asked him if he had had intercourse with her yet. He said no. If she was a good wife, it would be all right. He would have long ago had she been the same as Aye, but since she was no good, he wouldn't; and then he wouldn't have to pay for her. He said he might never have intercourse with her until she died. She had

*115 [123] unsuccessfully to get from me.

*115 583 A few days ago he said he was going to go to Tangwishamp to get some shell money owed him. Wof and Kis went with him. Mar's older brother died and a Tangwishamp married his widow. They shall try to collect the bride price that was due for her. The usual price for a [587] woman is a large bag of shell money of all kinds. In the case of a widow the pay is much reduced-- only two strings (3 marks).

[123] Kar tells me that since I am Mar's 'father', I should contribute to his bride price.

*115 January 20, 1937.

[648] Mar said that he thought he would go to work for the Whites to [464] earn some money so that he could buy a wife. One of his older brothers [583] spoke up and said that he could not do this, for he is needed for the [476] communal work of the sib. Mar did not protest.

[614] January 23, 1937.

[114] I made a trip to Tangwishamp accompanied by Mar, Kar, Owiyap, Haub, Mey and Mundik. While there Mar was responsible for the story that the Tangwishamps intended to kill us in order to procure for themselves the axes and knives which we had brought for trading purposes.

January 26, 1937.

[123] This morning Mar came in complaining of a headache. I gave him an [154] aspirin, and he said that he does not like this place because there is too much sorcery; Mar, particularly, always sorcerizes people. Later [241] he said that the next day he was going to the bush to plant his yams. He would arrive tomorrow and then scrape sago for two days. Then he would break ground for two days with the aid of Mas who had already gone to the bush with his sister.

January 27, 1937.

#115 Mar came this morning to say he was on his way and stayed all day. This evening he said that everything is prepared for an early departure the next morning. (Yesterday he seemd to have been waiting for Hamb to return).

January 28, 1937.

[123] This morning he came again and said he was leaving now. I told him to go, but he waited for a while and then asked me if I would join him, or at least come later. I could not go, but he waited and finally said that [439] he did not believe he would go after all. He said he would scrape some sago and trade it for fish with the Yambon and prepare food for a feast to pay for others to come and help him. He suggested that perhaps Hamb would shoot a'gouria' for him for this feast, but added that perhaps Hamb would be cross with him for asking. Finally about ten o'clock he felt that [461] he could delay no longer and left looking very sullen, accompanied by [241] Owiyap's sister. There was quite a bit of pressure toward his going; both Owiyap and May said that the amount of weeds in his garden was disgraceful.

February 3, 1937.

Mar returned this morning about 10:00, greeted me warmly and said that his work was almost completed; he left Owiyap, Awa, and Ehiya there to finish it. [787] He stated that he came today because of a nightmare that I was beating [123] him with a stick. He had awakened screaming with terror and started back here as soon as it was light in order to find out if I was cross with him for something.

This afternoon he invited me to visit Mar with him. When we arrived, he appeared a trifle nervous but otherwise quite natural. He greeted the

*115 584 883 marry her at all he thought that she would probably be married by the time he returned; if not he would marry her.

February 3, 1937.

*115 752 123 657 The sore on Gwiyap's leg, which developed when we were still at Ambunti, still does not heal properly, and looks pretty bad. Several times before he has suggested going in to the station. Wes was going in today to meet Tip so I decided to send Gwiyap. I told him last night and at first he agreed to go, but then he began to think of reasons why he should not go. I insisted. This morning he again tried to get out of it, saying that Her had told him to wait for him. I looked at him, and he grinned sheepishly and said, "All right, I'll go."

Summary made February 11, 1937.

128 133 Anything like a day by day account, is of course impossible, so I think the best thing to do at this point is to summarize the culture briefly as it looks to us at this point. The Kwoma is a group of mountains running north and west of the government station at Ambunti which are known as the Prilungua range. The Sepik River runs around the south and east edges of these mountains, and the great sago plane which stretches to the Dutch border and to the sea bounds them on the west and north. From Ambunti station at their south-eastern tip, to Tangwishamp at their north-western is a distance of about ten miles. The mountains consist of a series of short ridges running in all directions, the general trend being in the form of a s, its beginning at Ambunti, its end at Tangwishamp, we being situated about in the middle of the diagonal. The slopes of these ridges are very precipitous; it is usually necessary either to dig ones feet into the earth or to hold onto vines and roots to keep ones footing. [132] 241 A dense forest of large trees covers the whole area except for small garden plots cleared here and there. The highest point, Ambunti Mountain, is 1320 ft. above sea level.

Division of Labor

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Women catch fish, make net bags, gather firewood, fetch and carry water.(The latter two occupations are taboo to men, i.e., they are unmanly.) Men make spears and arrows, and wash sago pith.(If a woman washes it and it is then eaten by a man, he will die). Both men and women hunt with bow and arrow and spear, besides doing garden work. In addition women do the cooking.

Gardening-- planting of yams

244
241 In preparation for the planting of yams, the land is cleared, the
[313] tops of large trees are cut off and the small trees are chopped down entirely. The small trees are allowed to lie on the ground for a couple of months, or until they are thoroughly dried. The refuse is then collected and burned. The ground is broken with a digging stick and the planter puts in the yams.

[311] Because of the hilly terrain, small terraces about a foot square are built. If the slope is very steep a small buttress is made with pegs stuck in the ground and cross sticks thrown behind them for a sort of retaining wall. If the slope is gentle, the terrace is made by simply leveling out the earth. The breaking of the ground is done with a pointed stick which is forced in the ground and then pried up hill while the ground is forced out and down. This prying is repeated until the terrace
244 is formed and the ground is softened. The seeds are planted butt end down and the head up at right angles to the level ground, and covered so that the stem is just below the surface.

After the yams have begun to come up, stringers are put up for the vines. Split liana stringers are suspended from the branches of the cut-off trees and pegged to the ground beside each yam hill. (See figure) Care is taken so that one stringer is not pegged above another depriving it of rain and sunlight. This is done for all yam plants, the vines twining around the stringers.